

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELFAS 00078 111547Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20

HA-05 /082 W

-----071405 120221Z /65

R 111358Z MAY 78

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1893

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS BELFAST 78

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, UK

SUBJECT: APPARENT SUICIDE IN POLICE CUSTODY RAISES POLITICAL
STORM

1. THE DEATH BY HANGING IN A BELFAST POLICE CELL OF A CATHOLIC SUSPECTED OF COMPLICITY IN A POLICEMAN'S MURDER IS RAISING A POLITICAL STORM IN NORTHERN IRELAND. ACCORDING TO A POLICE STATEMENT, 27-YEAR-OLD BRIAN MAGUIRE WAS ARRESTED AT 0600 MAY 9 AND INTERVIEWED BY DETECTIVES AT THE CASTLEREAGH CENTER DURING THE DAY, FINISHING AT 2245. HE WAS TAKEN TO A TOILET AT 0700 THE NEXT DAY AND 20 MINUTES AFTER RETURNING TO HIS CELL WAS FOUND "HANGING FROM A STRIP TORN FROM ABEDSHEET ATTACHED TO THE VENTILATION GRILL ON THE WALL." ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, POLICE SOURCES SAID MAGUIRE HAD SIGNED A STATEMENT ADMITTING HANDLING A REVOLVER USED IN THE KILLING OF A POLICEMAN APRIL 22. FOUR OTHER MEN AND A WOMAN HAVE BEEN CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MURDER. MAGUIRE REPORTEDLY WAS IMPRISONED FOR ABOUT 10 MONTHS IN 1973-74 PENDING TRIAL FOR ROBBERY. HE WAS CONVICTED AND GIVEN A SUSPENDED SENTENCE.

2. REACTION TO MAGUIRE'S DEATH WAS QUICK. REPUBLICAN AND LIKE-THINKING ORGANIZATIONS CHARGED MURDER BY THE POLICE AND
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ASKED FOR AN INDEPENDENT, PUBLIC INVESTIGATION, RATHER THAN THE PRESCRIBED INVESTIGATION BY A SENIOR POLICE OFFICER. THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN (POLITICAL ARM OF THE PROVISIONAL IRA) ORGANIZED PROTEST MARCHES IN BELFAST, LONDONDERRY AND LURGAN. THE FIRST ONE DETERIORATED INTO STREET VIOLENCE.

3. COMMENT: THE DEATH IS A PLUM FOR THE REPUBLICAN FORCES.

NO MATTER THE OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION, MANY WILL BELIEVE
MAGUIRE WAS KILLED BY THE POLICE: DRIVEN TO DEATH BY MENTAL
AND/OR PHYSICAL TORTURE, OR MURDERED IN A FEIGNED SUICIDE IN
VENGEANCE FOR THE MURDER OF THE POLICEMAN.

4. THE PLACE AND TIMING OF THE DEATH ALSO WILL BE EXPLOITED:
CASTLEREAGH WAS BUILT AS A PRELIMINARY POLICE INTERROGATION
CENTER AND HAS LONG BEEN TARGETTED FOR ACCUSATIONS OF TORTURE.
LAST YEAR'S CAMPAIGN ON THOSE LINES FIZZLED OUT, AND IN RECENT
MONTHS THE REPUBLICANS HAVE CONCENTRATED ON THE CONDITION OF
IRA PRISONERS AT THE MAZE PRISON AS A MEANS OF DISCREDITING
AND OBTAINING CONCESSIONS FROM THEIR ENEMIES (SEPTEL). THE
DEATH ADDS A FILLIP TO THAT CAMPAIGN. STOUT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ALLEGATIONS, DEATHS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BELFAS00078
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780201-0521
Format: TEL
From: BELFAST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780571/aaaaciao.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5f7e1fa1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2728219
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: APPARENT SUICIDE IN POLICE CUSTODY RAISES POLITICAL STORM
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, UK, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5f7e1fa1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014